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SUBJECT: S/GWI PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

REF: A. 10 STATE 12531

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In response to Ref A, below is Post's submission for S/GWI funding for the Central African Republic (CAR). The program seeks to improve women's leadership capacity, provide technical assistance and capacity building for women's organizations, and promote women's political advancement. END SUMMARY.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

¶2. (U) The Central African Republic (CAR) is a landlocked country of 4.5 million people. After decades of coups, violence, and international neglect, the country initiated an Inclusive Political Dialogue (IPD) in December 2008 to provide a roadmap for peace leading up to national elections in April 2010. An encouraging recommendation by the IPD called for women to occupy 35 percent of posts in government ministries and political parties. Currently there are 10 women in the 105-seat National Assembly and three in the president's 32-person cabinet. There are no laws prohibiting women from participating in political life, but most women lack the financial means and knowledge of the process to compete in political races. This causes women's engagement in the political process to remain extremely limited.

¶3. (U) A core element of Embassy Bangui's strategic mission objective is to foster the fledgling democratic process in the CAR. The engagement of the USG in support of the civic political participation of women seeks to ensure a peaceful democratic transition for the CAR and assist CAR in meeting the recommendations of the IPD. It is imperative to not only increase the number of women involved in the political process, but also to improve the capacity of local women civic society organizations to promote electoral reform and other improvements in the electoral system. In a country where civil society is weak and struggles from a lack of means, the U.S. has a major opportunity to bridge a vital gap and can empower those at risk of continued marginalization.

¶4. (U) In 2007, there were no groups in CAR focusing on women's participation in the political process. In order to increase female participation in politics, the UN's Office for the Central Africa Republic (BONUCA) assisted with the foundation of a women's political group -- the Group of 23. Since its founding, BONUCA has provided G23 modest technical and financial support. In order to increase the political enfranchisement of the vast population of female citizens, G23 must expand its activities and membership outside of Bangui. The group's ultimate goal is to ensure that 30 percent of elected officials are female. The organization has participated in civic education activities in the past, such as a 16-day campaign to end violence against women organized by Mercy Corps and BONUCA. They also organized a training workshop in December 2009 to encourage women to participate in the upcoming elections.

15. (U) The Association of Women's Lawyers (Association de Femmes Juristes -- AFJ) is another organization which strives to increase women participation in the political process. The AFJ provided training for female election observers for the 2005 elections, and plans to do so again for the 2010 elections. The AFJ's nation-wide reach is unique for civil society organizations in the CAR.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

16. (U) Embassy Bangui requests USD 75,000 in S/GWI funding for the CAR to provide technical assistance, funding, and capacity building to the G23 and the AFJ women's organizations. Specifically, the funds will be used to initiate programs to improve women's leadership capacity and promote women's political advancement. The goal of the project is to sensitize and build women's capacity to actively engage in the democratic processes and to initiate and promote good governance in the CAR.

17. (U) Due to multiple disruptive social upheavals and poor educational infrastructure, civil society organizations remain nascent in their management and accountability practices. They lack dedicated staff to oversee funds, have informal or non-existent procedures for disbursements, lack of safes to store petty cash, and are inexperienced with techniques for financial reporting. Due to a lack of norms of best financial and management practices in many CAR civil society organizations, post proposes that the initial grant be conducted through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) whom will provide subgrants to G23 and the AFJ. NDI has substantial experience working with subgrantees and managing women's

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political participation programs.

18. (U) NDI recently opened an office in Bangui in order to manage a one million USD, nine month project for civic and voter education, training of domestic election monitors, and the deployment of regional observers for the 2010 elections. Adding a component to the NDI program for the advancement of women's political and leadership capacities would be complementary to the current program. NDI will disburse funding to the local partners in manageable tranches and provide direct financial oversight and support in order to minimize financial risks stemming from low local capacity.

19. (U) Specific program activities would include: a workshop to train potential female candidates, a workshop on women's leadership, training on the electoral process and how to increase women's participation in politics, the production and distribution of educational materials on the importance of women's participation in politics and the process to run for office, and radio announcements on community radio on the importance of political participation by women.

110. (U) The desired outcomes are:

- a) To increase the transparency of the electoral process by producing informational materials on the electoral process and how to run for office.
- b) To increase female participation in the political process and encourage more female candidates to run for local and national office.
- c) To strengthen the capacity of local women's civil society organizations.
- d) To increase women's leadership in the political and democracy building processes.

111. (U) The performance measures are:

- a) The number of potential female candidates trained.
- b) The number of workshops completed on leadership for women, the electoral process, and how to increase women's participation in politics.
- c) The production and distribution of informational materials.

- d) The production of radio announcements for community radio.
- e) The increased financial and management capabilities of AFJ and G23.
- f) The ability to reach women outside of Bangui.

¶12. (U) The proposed budget is:

- a) Workshops for potential female candidates, Leadership Courses, and Workshops on the electoral process and women's participation in politics USD 40,000.00
 - b) Production and distribution of informational materials USD 5,000.00
 - c) Radio announcements USD 5,000.00
 - d) NDI Technical Assistance and Training USD 25,000.00
- Total -- USD 75,000.00

¶13. (U) Post Management - This grant will be managed by the POL/ECON Officer with support from two local program staff and a rotating Presidential Management Fellow. The POL/ECON section has similar management experience through the successful management of the Embassy's Self-Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund programs.

¶14. (U) Embassy thanks the Department in advance for its timely consideration of and response to this proposal.
SMITH